



DWIGHT PELZ

A REPORT FROM KING COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER DWIGHT PELZ**January 2003**

Grandmother's Hill preserved as open space

One of the things I am most proud of in my six years as a King County Councilmember is my work to preserve sensitive land threatened by development. Just last month we were able to gain funding in the King County budget for the Grandmother's Hill project in Tukwila for 2003.

The hill is a glacial remnant that contains fossils millions of years old. This land is also a sacred site to Native Americans and is referred to in many oral traditions of the Puget Sound Salish people. The property includes 600 feet of shoreline along the Duwamish in the critical transition zone between salt and fresh water that is important to salmon habitat. I have visited the site and have been able to witness a wide variety of native plants and views that spanned the Duwamish valley from Mt. Rainier to the south, to downtown Seattle to the north. Grandmother's Hill is 10.5 acres located on the bank of the Duwamish in the Allentown neighborhood.

Recently, the owners of the site have proposed removing these hills with dynamite for proposed light-industrial development.



(From left to right) Botanist Fred Stark, Tukwila Parks and Recreation Director, Bruce Fletcher, and King County Councilmember Dwight Pelz examine fossils on Grandmother's Hill.

They are open to giving the community an opportunity to raise funds to acquire this land, but they have given a very limited window in which to do so. The cost to acquire this

property is an estimated \$1.8 million dollars. This year we were able to secure \$500,000 in funds in the FY 2003 King County Budget. This money comes from the Conservation Futures Fund which is a dedicated fund of money set aside from property taxes to acquire open space in the county. With the recent funding from the King County budget and other sources, about \$600,000 has been raised to date.

The long term vision for Grandmother's Hill is to develop the site to include a minimum-impact trail system to the lower and upper vistas, as well as the woodland, wetland, and meadow areas. Outdoor interpretive displays would teach students and visitors about local and geologic history, botany and Native American traditions. The City of Tukwila is willing to own and maintain the site, with the Cascade Land Conservancy holding a conservation easement. The Friends of the Duwamish River Bend Hills are committed to long-term advocacy and stewardship of the site.

One of the most rewarding parts of working on this project is the

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Grandmother's Hill cont'd

chance to work with the Friends of the Duwamish Riverbend Hill. This is a determined group of volunteers that have single-handedly raised this project to the attention of conservation groups, elected officials, and neighbors throughout Tukwila. They meet regularly to plan tours of the property and coordinate fundraising efforts. Their efforts have resulted in students at Foster High School putting on a play last year which raised over \$1,000 and introduced many Tukwila residents to the need to save the hill.

We should be proud of the success that the community has had in raising funds to date, but there is a long way to go in a very short time. The Friends of the Duwamish Riverbend Hills are tireless in their work to preserve this unique property, but they need your help. If you would like to help with your time, money or special talents please contact the folks in the

adjoining box. They have a wish list ready of volunteer opportunities that might suit your interests.

One of the most striking images from the top of Grandmother's Hill is just how much of the Duwamish Valley has been lost to development. The sea of rooftops and parking lots is a vivid reminder of how important it is to save this special property. Please join me in the effort to make Grandmother's Hill a legacy for future generations.

Help Save The Hill

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Fort Dent and South Central Pool Transfers

Recently there has been extensive media coverage of the King County budget crisis and its effect on the continued operation of County parks and pools. The county is broke, and can no longer afford to operate parks or pools located within city limits.

The future of the South Central Pool and Fort Dent Park were question marks. Fortunately, the City of Tukwila has stepped forward to insure that both of these facilities will be kept open to serve Tukwila residents and area families.

Fort Dent Park and the South Central Pool will become part of the Tukwila Parks and Recreation Department. Fort Dent is one of the most heavily used parks for active recreation such as softball, cricket, and soccer in King County. In an exciting development, Tukwila is currently negotiating with a private recreation group to have them improve, maintain, and operate these playfields. This would greatly reduce the cost to Tukwila.